



# NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**PETER R. HILLS**  
*Fire Chief*  
*County Fire Warden*

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**CONTACT:** *Tracey Martinez, Public Information Officer*  
*(909) 386-8408, 1-800-426-8689, pager #3307*

## COUNTY FIRE RETURNS TO BAKER

San Bernardino County Fire officials are pleased to announce the return of emergency personnel to the Baker area on a full-time basis.

The Board of Supervisors today approved an operational plan to immediately restore emergency services on a 24-hour basis to the Baker area until June 30, 2003. The operational plan beyond this date is pending review.

The plan calls for Paid-Call Firefighters, supplemented by an inmate crew, to respond to emergency calls from Baker. "The safety and welfare of our citizens and those traveling through our County are our primary concern. Restoring full-time fire protection to Baker is a significant step to providing these services," stated First District Supervisor Bill Postmus.

Fire protection for the I-15 corridor from Basin Road to the Nevada state line had been provided by one County Fire employee who supervised a fire crew comprised of inmates from the Baker Correctional Facility. In early July when state budget cuts forced the closure of the correctional facility, the County Fire Department had no choice other than to run its operations from the Harvard Station, located 42 miles south of Baker. The Baker Correction Facility has recently been reactivated and inmates are being transferred to the facility. On November 19, 2002, the Board of Supervisors approved an agreement with the Baker Correctional Facility.

In an effort to facilitate a timely reestablishment of fire and rescue services in Baker, County Fire personnel began inmate training to prepare them for the situations they will face in the field. Paid-call firefighters and an Emergency Service Coordinator have been training inmates to meet the requirements of Basic Firefighter I (180 hours). In addition to being certified in first-aid and CPR, inmates learn how to deal with hazardous materials, as well as fire suppression techniques, to include the use of the "Jaws of Life" to extricate trapped accident victims. It is anticipated the inmate fire crews will be trained and ready to respond with County Firefighters by mid December. During the daytime hours while the training program is in session, County Fire personnel have been responding from Baker to emergency calls. After hours, Fire personnel were continuing to respond from the Harvard Station.

County Fire officials continue to work closely with Supervisor Postmus' office to search for opportunities to improve fire and emergency medical services to the unfunded fire protection area.

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